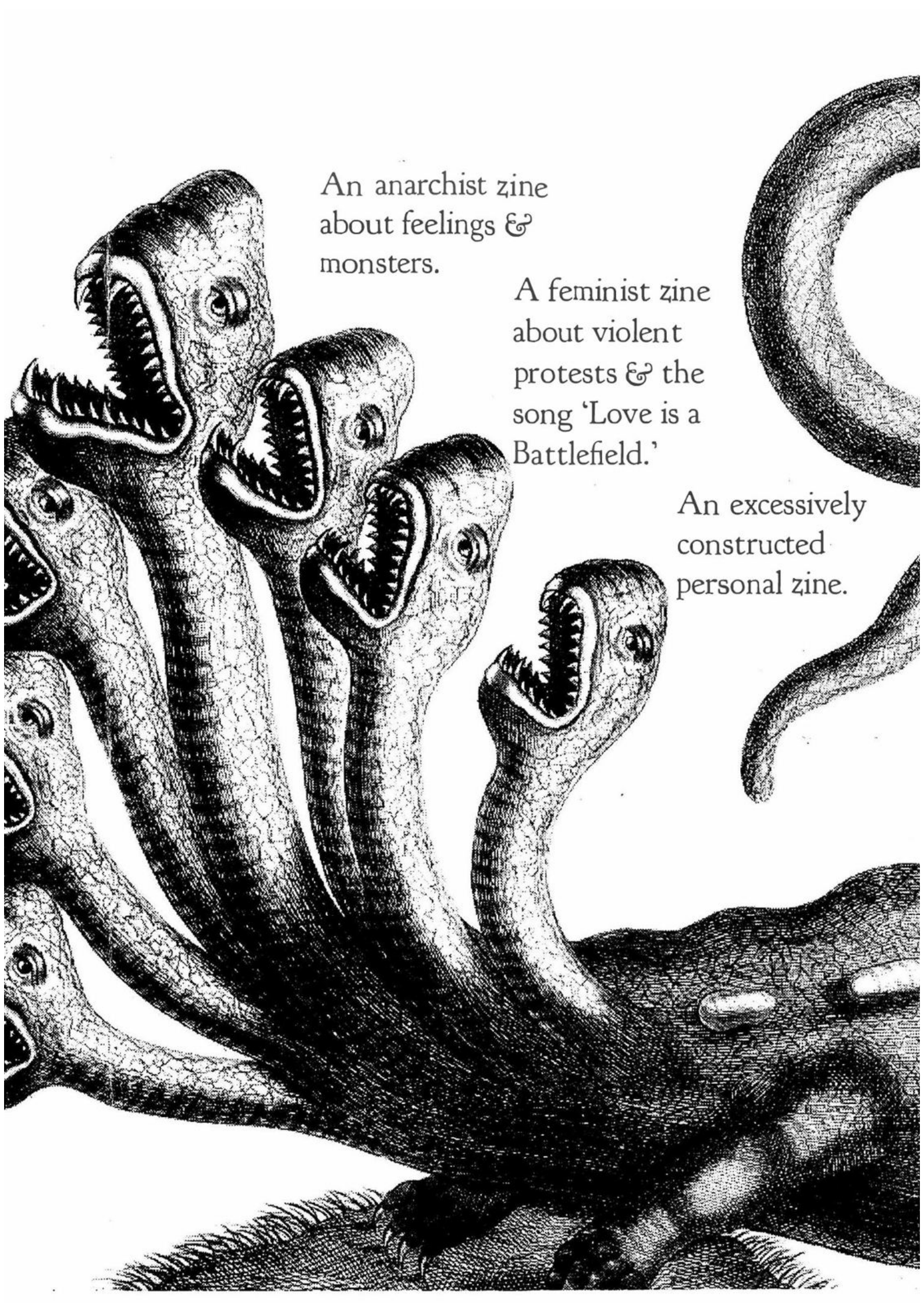
TAKING THINGS TOO FAR


An anarchist zine
about feelings &
monsters.
A feminist zine
about violent
protests & the
song 'Love is a
Battlefield.'
An excessively
constructed
personal zine.

“Because we rejected a certain kind of theoretical language, people just assumed that we were dumb.”

— Chris Kraus, quoting Alice Notley, *I Love Dick*

This zine is about the same things I've been making zines about for however long. Anger, & how to use it without burning off all other emotions. What it is to move through this world in this body. What it is to live as a woman & an anarchist. The collective projects of trying to learn to live.

It's an object for the same people I've long made zines for & for some new ones, & for the same reasons.

I was rereading a zine I made ten years ago: its introduction says, in part:

- even if everything's been said before,
sometimes you still have to say it -
&
- i don't wanna type i wanna break things -

That's still as good an introduction as any to almost anything I write.

“if people use music as a way to confront and accept their own sadness or unhappiness, then the key maybe is to try to link sadness to dissatisfaction, and to try to universalize this dissatisfaction somehow, otherwise you end up as just another celine dion on the maudlin heartbreak train... it’s something we have to give more thought to, and work harder at achieving... we don’t want to encourage self-pity; ideally we’d like to make music that would make our friends feel better about getting out of bed in the morning...”

— Godspeed You Black Emperor!

A note on form & style:

I could have made this my usual way (typewriter, cut-&-paste, found images - an aesthetic I still love & appreciate). It would have taken just as much craft to produce the impression of artless, slap-dash authenticity, for this to appear as a small & modest object.

I treasure such objects, but that's not the effect I want to produce.

It should be clear that this is a work of fiction.

WE ARE YOUNG

It was a castle, it was a playground for lost children. Never more so than in what we thought would be the last days. Barricading into the night, freed from any obligation to pretend that we were doing this for anyone other than ourselves, that we had any reason more noble than 'Fuck The Fucking Fuckers'.

Madcap improvisation, wine bottle in one hand, drill in the other, half-plans that became tremendous structures or semi-comic entanglements.

'Another round of whiskey-coffee?'

It's a magical state, the place beyond panic. When what you're doing is so impossible that you just do it bit by bit. Friends came to help from our town & other cities. Everyone found somewhere to sleep.

The eviction hearing was two days away, the eviction hearing was tomorrow. Did we have any banners for the demo? Would anyone come? What were we going to do anyway?

Our lives were our experiment: this was never more clear than in those high-pressure times. Everything's clearer when it's all at risk.

Two of us retreated to my room to write a statement, the essence of which was: *we're not going to court because we know we'll lose. Fuck you. This is our home.* I stood on

a chair in the kitchen to read our draft – half proud, half embarrassed. You're always open to ridicule, whenever you say anything you really mean. 'You use the word "society" too much. Sounds like a teenage punk band. Other than that, I like it.' We changed some words, I wrote it carefully in my neatest handwriting, went downstairs to find someone from outside to take it away & post it on the internet.

The evening after court, people started a water fight that quickly accelerated to saucepans-full being thrown around the kitchen. When someone went to throw the soup I yelled 'Fuck sake! We still have to live here!' It stopped. 'Someone always has to take things that bit too far, don't they', I said, mocking my role as a cranky old woman as a way of apologising.

The court order came & then we waited. Waiting grew boring. You can't sustain a life on hold, stuck in a building that feels like a trap you're only waiting to fight for. We got tired of it, we came to our senses, we had stressful meetings & toned down our plans.

They came one morning through a window we hadn't considered to barricade.

You get ready for the final fight but it's never the end. The world isn't saved or more doomed than it was. Our apocalypse never arrives: it's already here.

“Since yesterday, June 28, we live like cockroaches in Syntagma square. We are sprayed continuously with chemicals by the Greek police regardless of what we do or what we say, but we persist. We leave Syntagma square for a while to catch our breath & keep on coming back. We rest a bit & return to the square. [...]

As we are becoming cockroaches we begin, without really realizing it, to adopt tactics of stasis, of perseverance & endurance, that were previously unknown to us. Chemicals keep on flying,

sound bombs keep on exploding
all around us making terrible
noise & the crowds respond
by not leaving, by remaining
at Syntagma square. Becoming
cockroaches & growing more &
more resistant to the chemicals,
our bodies begin to mutate. In
gas masks, painting maalox on
our faces, wearing sun glasses &
ski masks, we persist. The figures
in gas masks & maalox recognize
each other even when they meet
further away from Syntagma
square..”

— Nelli Kambouri & Pavlos Hatzopoulos,
The Tactics of Occupation: Becoming
Cockroach

I once read that the word 'demonstration' shares the same root as the word 'monster'. The dictionary says otherwise.

What I learnt was that 'demonstration', in the sense of a political gathering is defined as "a public manifestation of feeling; often taking the form of a procession & mass meeting," & 'monster' is from the Latin *monstrum*, originally 'a divine portent or warning', formed on *monere*, 'to warn'.

A monster is a warning, a sign. A demonstration is a manifestation of feeling.

“They had seemed wild to me when I’d first seen them, like creatures both natural & rarefied, but now I was no different to them. If we had stood together on the shoreline two thousand years ago facing the invading ships with fire in our hand & screaming for them to come, they would have called us Furies, & they would have been afraid.”

— Sarah Hall, *The Carhullan Army*

On our streets & in our spaces we become monsters: cockroaches, pigeons. New creatures discover new ways to communicate, create new rituals of speech & silence. Pass notes then burn them. Talk huddled in out-of-the-way places, hiding from the light like roaches.

Creatures crowded together become a new creature. Those weeks in Melbourne filling the floor of that friend's living room, tripping over each other then sitting each day neat-as-we-could in the courtroom, just to be there. Getting up each morning after the night before's drinking just to be bored in court next to each other, to fail together to keep our faces straight. That eviction-threat in London, three people to a bed, five to a room. A dozen people dozing on the roof in the sun, the closeness of bodies. Cynical of everyone else but lovely to each other, with a banner saying 'even when we lose we win.'

“Work in a capitalist society automatically carries an element of excess because it is ultimately based on co-operation that can never be reducible to capital. Our abstract potential always exceeds & tries to escape the conditions of its production (that is, the capital relation). that’s why we think there’s ‘life despite capitalism’; because as a living, breathing mass, our needs, our desires, our lives constantly transcend the limits of capital. [[...]]

Every now & then, in all sorts of different social arenas, we can see moments of obvious collective creation, where our ‘excess of life’ explodes. In these moments of excess, everything appears to be up for grabs & time & creativity accelerates.”

— The Free Association, Moments of Excess

HEART ACHE TO HEART ACHE WE STAND

“Teenage girls puke in private, they puke because they have been presented with an impossible image of femininity that is puke-worthy. But what if bulimics didn’t purge in private but instead purged in public, much like 28 Days Later or some other zombie film? I love this notion of teenage girls vomiting all over their math papers, all over their teachers, standing in a line like that film Suicide Club or as a row of crazed Care Bears, puking all over the world.

I want to say, though, that this kind of writing—which is really a political stance—has a danger to it. If you puke & puke & puke & never stop, you will die. [...]

I think that this stance is inherently rebellious, inherently teenage. We should not move past it because we are now "grown up," should not take on some modernist, progressive approach. But to learn to wield the vomit, perhaps, in sharper shapes, & to become stronger, to become a monster so that you can withstand the purging, & to eventually purge flowers, sequins, rhinestones, yards & yards of tulle."

— Kate Durbin

"I can't eat nearly as much as I'd like to throw up"

— Max Liebermann, 30 January 1933

Shane wrote in a zine once something like: transparency is a Centrelink ploy. I don't believe the truth will set me free & I'd rather speak away from power. But still I want to write past the limits of shame.

> "fuck solidarity, we need more than that, we need to crawl into each other's skins."
>
> — Anwyn, *Drift*

(And I image each of us wearing our history like a wedding dress: the past trailing us in blood & dirt, a constant weight we no longer notice.)

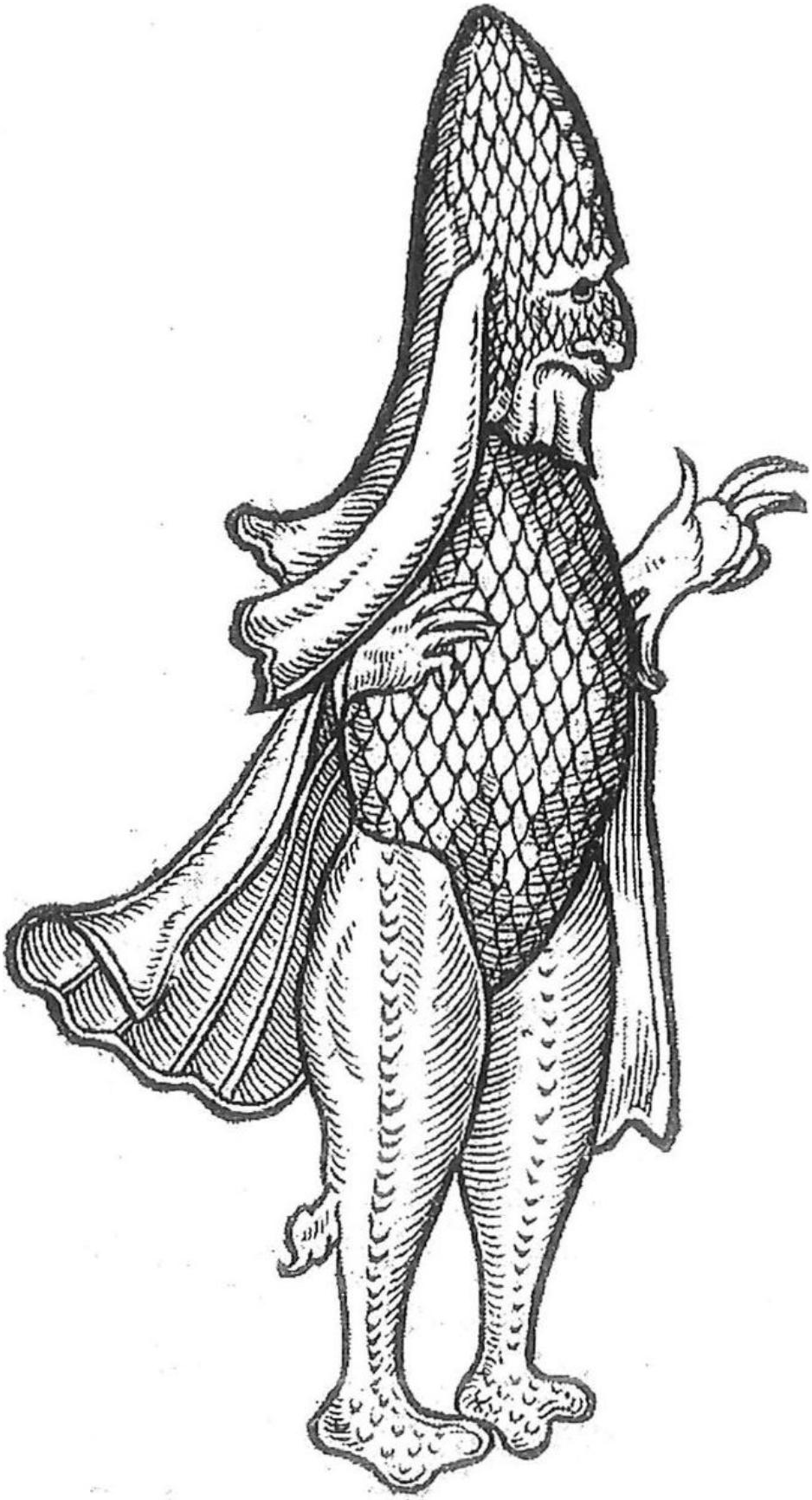
“Shame is the shadow of love”

—PJ Harvey

I can’t talk of love without talking of feeling so disgustingly *female*. Needy, ugh, gaping & weeping & soggy.

As if it’s possible to be free from the reality of interdependence, the messiness of interconnection, of needing & wanting & being needed. As if it’s possible to be *an individual*. How horrible.

The only way out is through.



And what happens if you talk to someone about love & they're silent? What happens when you're the silent one? What monsters live in that silence?

“To be a feminist is to be a paranoid. Everyone tells us that we are reading into things too much, that what we are seeing isn’t there. There are certain emotional registers with which we become familiar: scepticism, mistrust, defensiveness.

Our reactions are never proportionate to the actions that preceded them.”

— M. Sandovsky, Letters to L: paranoia & visions, *Lies* vol. 1.

I think a lot about how our politics (therefore/ that is, our lives) must have room for emotions: for expressions of all kinds of emotions, not just (righteous or otherwise) anger. And I think about hard I find that. What do I talk about? What do I try to avoid? Which feelings to I try to pretend aren't there or don't matter?

Those times my neck aches from holding my tongue set firm in my jaw, locked with the weight of everything I don't say.

But of course I want what I can't have. It's not an ideological test I fail. We all want what we can't have. If what we wanted was simple, realistic, we'd never talk of revolution. We wouldn't talk of anarchy if we could easily shape our desires to fit this world.

Those people I have been closest to have almost always been people with whom I have shared an intensity that came about because of what we call politics, or ways of living that grow around certain directions of thought.

And maybe I could have just had other hobbies. There are other forms of intense moments people share. But there's something precise & special about the common pursuit of the impossible. Then, all you have is each other.

“She was filthy, she was trembling, & her face was blank & mad, for she had lost that minimal confidence in the world which is called sanity.”

— Ursula Le Guin, Winter’s King

— Notes I made at another time, in another place —

1. What does it say about me that my first reaction to yet another incident of sexual wrongness is a sense of doom & anger & I-don’t-want-to-have-to-deal-with-this-again rather than concern for my friend who got fucked over?

2. This anger isn’t an energy. It’s just a rage.

3. I determine that I will speak with him directly. I think I am ready, then hear he might come over & know I just don’t want to. He never comes by, & I’m uselessly angry the rest of the day.

4. In one of my dreams I say to him 'angry? You have no idea how angry I can be.'

5. Being a woman & an anarchist is being in the underground of the underground. We tell each other things. We hold the secrets of the rest of the scene.

6. Again, I think: if our texts speak only of anger, we're not fully human. I think: this isn't the anger you want me to feel. I think: those who write about celebrating anger don't know what this means.

7. I want to make a poster that says 'we're not here to do your feeling for you.'

8. I keep returning to the problematics of toughness. And telling myself: I'm tough. I can do this thing that scares me.

9. I want more. Anger isn't enough. I can't escape it & there's no simple explosion to make it go away. Nothing I could break would change this. I have to find a politics of transformation.

10. This is it: in hegemonic anglo masculinity, is anger the only strong emotion men are allowed to express openly, with passion? The same can be said of anarchist politics: except in our case, it's for everyone.

Endnote: I never did anything about this situation.

NO PROMISES NO DEMANDS

“‘But then what do you want?’

Our reply is:

‘we are not citizens. We will never adapt your point of view of the totality, your point of view of management. We refuse to play the game, that’s all.

It’s not our job to tell you what sauce we would like to be eaten with.’”

— Tiqqun, This Is Not A Program

There are people I know who stay themselves in captivity by kicking out at every opportunity, however difficult that makes things. Others who just wait it out with some kind of humour. Me, I withdraw until I am small & tough & silent & very far away. Sullen & unresponsive. I am almost not there. I let myself be aware only in flashes that I am locked in a box.

This is the prison society metaphor: a cop comes to the cell to ask if I want anything. Polite & almost cheerful: do I want a blanket, what kind of food do I want. I could run to the door & spit in her face. Instead I say: I want a blanket. I want water & the vegan meal. I remind myself not to say 'please' & 'thankyou', to refuse to ask for anything. I structure my sentences against the habits of politeness.

This is the prison society metaphor: we all end up cooperating to some degree. Out of habit. Because it's easier. Because we recognise even our enemies as human. So we get the terrible meal instead of nothing at all. So we don't get hurt.

They are so invested in politeness (here, with me). They are so invested in their own belief in themselves as good people. Three police spend half an hour trying to convince me that I should hand over my

clothes, that it will be easier, that it will be hard for me either way but easier if I cooperate, that they will take to pleasure in forcibly stripping me. (*Good*, I say in my mind, *or I'd have to cooperate.*) It's a bit like civil disobedience but with no citizens, no witnesses: if I use what little power I have to make them show that their power is force, it's only me & them who sees it. There's no strategy: it's just stubbornness.

The desk cop hand me back some of my property as I'm leaving. 'You're welcome' he says. As if I'm meant to thank him for giving me back what he took.

When released what I want most is to be touched, to be held by people I love, to fuck: to reestablish myself as a person connected to other people, as a body that moves & feels & doesn't just lie numb in a box.

LOVE IS A BATTLE FIELD

“Afterwards, at six o’clock, still sitting in the small, slightly sordid room after Patrick has left, I wonder if the reason I tend to say yes to everything is because I deeply believe I can survive anything, but I’m looking for the definitive proof.”

Scarlett Thomas, *The End of Mr Y*

1. I think in endless loops & swirls about questions of gender & public antagonism, political violence. There's the debate where one side says 'the black block is macho' & someone else says 'uh, there are women there too.' But this argument doesn't make sense to me of what it means to put on a mask & be addressed as 'lad'.

Let me be clear: I'm not seeking recognition as an individual true to the categories I'm recognised as all the time. To choose anonymity is precisely the opposite. But what does it mean to choose to be anonymous & thus be made masculine? I want a way out of the processes that reduce our collective experience to that of one category [young white men.]

2. Nothing, nothing is better than the joy & the danger of running up Oxford Street with two people I know & two hundred I don't know. Four young women march arm-in-arm on the footpath chanting 'David Cameron – Suck My Dick!'.

The crowd is mixed, behind the masks, & moves through different forms: throwing a burning bin at a cop then dancing then running up the street pulling bins up then smashing Vodafone shop windows then sitting in an intersection singing We Shall Not

Be Moved then driving back a Forward Intelligence Team unit. I'm scared of the consequences & of the potential. I'm in love with being out of control.

3. But also: my own sometimes un-ease in the spaces that surround these moments, my out-of-placeness as who I am. There are games I can play that I don't want to have to play; there are things I can prove that I'm bored of having to prove. And when I play these games too long I stop trusting myself.

4. The project of creating an aesthetics of antagonism that isn't read as masculine.

5. Monsters. Witches.

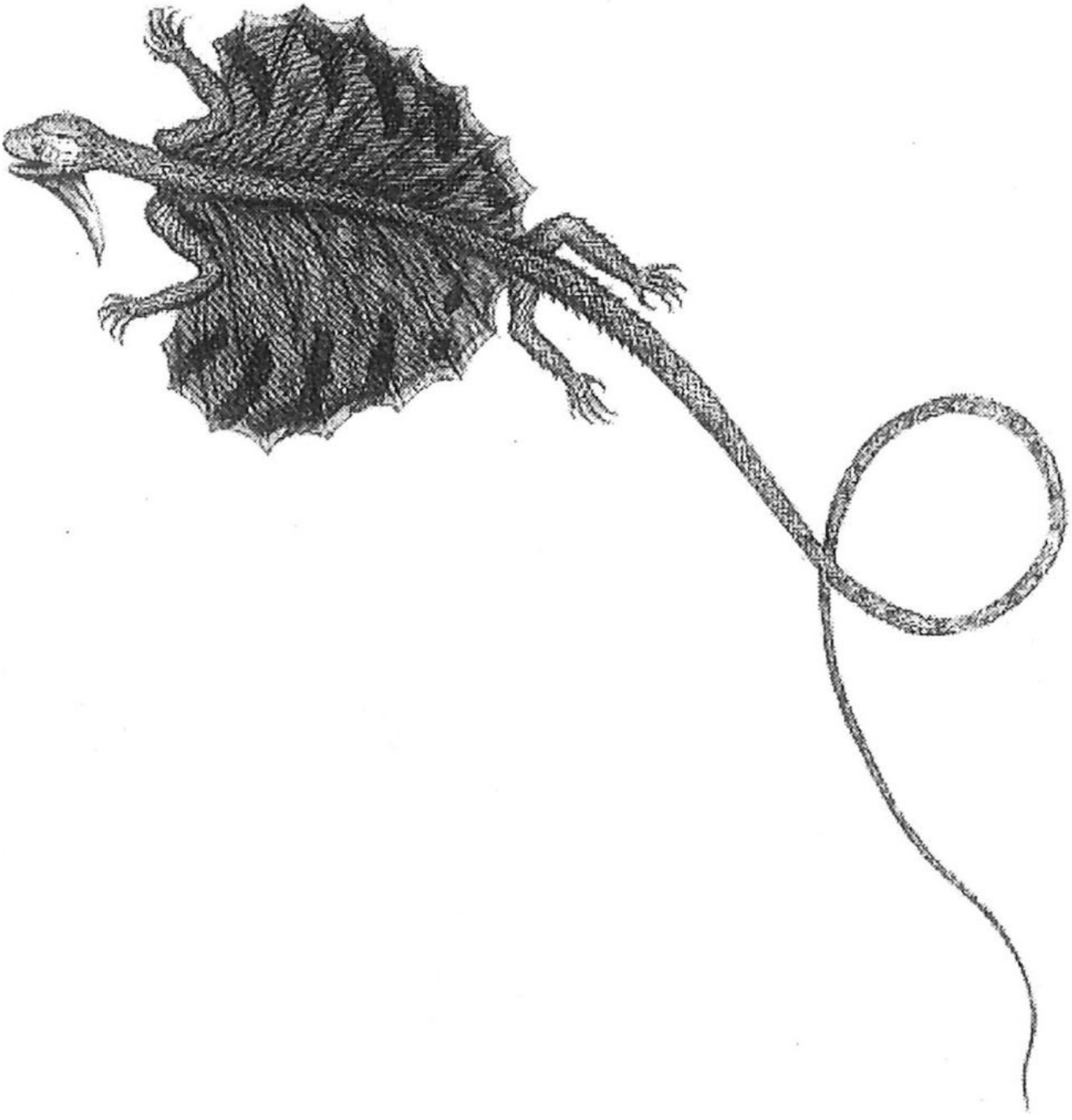
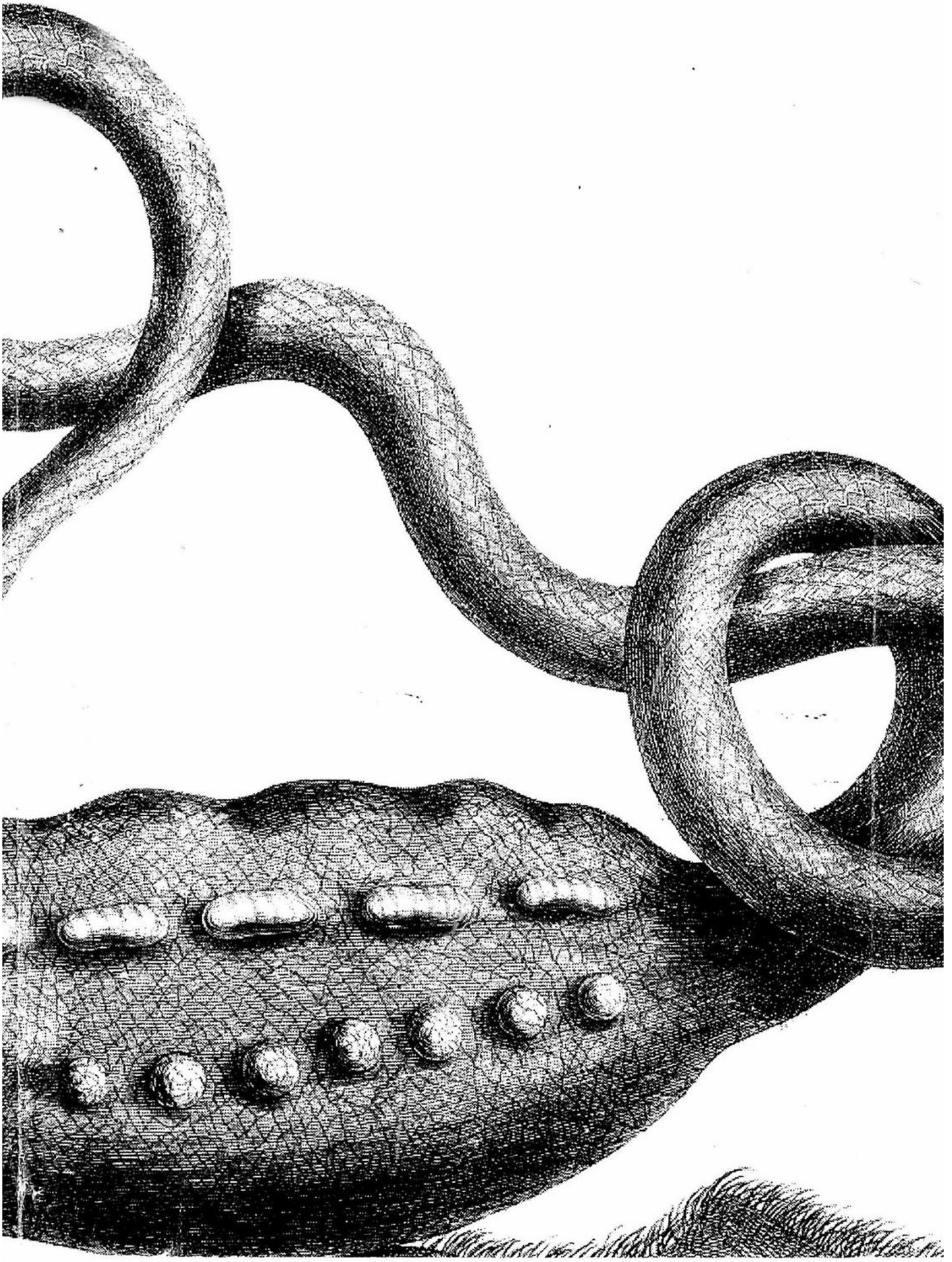
6. And the times I have loved most fiercely have often been times of conflict, of collaborative risk & danger. And the times I have felt the greatest anger have been times when those I love are being hurt.

7. I think I'm tough, deep down, but deep down I know I've never been tested. I've been through more than some & less than most. Aren't all of our lives a tissue of damages? The friends who leave & the friends who go mad, the ones who break your heart. Toughen us up, even as we try to stay tender.

It should be obvious that this text doesn't go nearly *far enough*. I write of emotional excess but don't really engage in it; hint at praise of monsters but don't become one; justify over-analysis but leave my points mainly in the quiet space between paragraph & quotation.

“I imagine other people will do different things & say different things & justify their lives in different ways & I really don’t care. All I want is for them to destroy some things & not get in the way of destroying everything. “Destruction” isn’t quite right, patriarchy destroys enough & confusing destruction with communization is deadly. ‘Decreate,’ ‘undo,’ ‘make impossible’ this shitty world.”

— C.E., Undoing sex: against sexual optimism, *Lies* vol 1

This zine is influenced by many texts - beyond even those quoted here in snippets - but most of all (even if it isn't clear how) by Sarah Hall's novel *The Carhullan Army*, *I Love Dick* by Chris Kraus, & *Lies: a journal of materialist feminism* (liesjournal.info)

Even more than that it's shaped by all the conversations in gestures & actions & words spoken & written. It's dedicated to all of you who take part in them.